



Catholic Faith, Life & Creed

A Complete Catechesis for Christian Living

Doctrinal Catechesis Session
Mary Birmingham

CHURCH STRUCTURE



The Ascension by Ranosonar: released into the public domain.



Begin with the Sign of the Cross

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Opening Prayer

Leader: Let us pray in the words used by Jesus on behalf of the Church.

“I will remain in the world no longer,
but they are still in the world,
and I am coming to you.

Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name,
the name you gave me,
so that they may be one as we are one” John 17:11 (NIV).

“That all of them may be one, Father,
just as you are in me and I am in you.

May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
I have given them the glory that you gave me,
that they may be one as we are one:
I in them and you in me.

May they be brought to complete unity
to let the world know that you sent me
and have loved them even as you have loved me” John 17:21-23 (NIV).

Amen.



Note to the Catechist

There may be more
material than you can use
in a one-hour session.
Select and arrange

accordingly. Use questions and material that is best suited for your particular group.



Read the connecting statement

to draw the line between this week's
liturgy and this chosen doctrinal theme.

This connecting statement is found in the *Breaking Open the Word* worksheet for this week.

Catholic Faith, Life & Creed Version 2.0

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Version 2.0 reflects all recent revisions in
the Roman Missal.

NIHIL OBSTAT
Rev. Steven Olds
Censor Liborum

IMPRIMATUR
† Most Rev. John Noonan
Bishop of Orlando

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Catechist continues:

When Jesus ascended to his Father, he promised his disciples and all future believers that he would be with us until the end of the age. That promise continues in the Church today. The Holy Spirit is with the Church, has been with the Church, and will continue to be with the Church until the end of time. Another doctrinal session regarding the Church addresses the images and models of Church—that the Church is one at the same time a servant; it is the people of God and the Church is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. Today we are going to talk about the structure of the Church—how it is organized.



Sharing Human Experience

Catechist continues:

- ▶ We are part of the human family.
- ▶ We have friends and we are social beings.
- ▶ Groups can be exclusive or inclusive.
- ▶ They can pull together or be divisive.
- ▶ When a group is unified, it can really pull things together and accomplish many common goals.
- ▶ There are many different types of communities.

Catechist invites a wider group discussion about this question:

- ▶ What are some different groups to which people might belong?

Catechist listens carefully to be sure they name at least these:

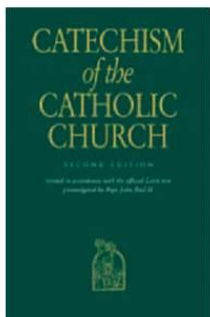
- ✓ family and friends,
- ✓ religious groups,
- ✓ ethnic groups,
- ✓ institutional groups,
- ✓ class, racial, or civic groups,
- ✓ city, state, national, or world groups.

Catechist invites participants to respond in groups of four, then surface insights in the larger group.

Catechist then poses the following questions:

- ▶ Have you ever had an experience of being part of a group other than your church group? What made you feel comfortable?
- ▶ What attracted you to this parish community?
- ▶ What made you feel welcome?
- ▶ What would you say are characteristics of a welcoming community?

Catechist uses easel paper and at the top of the paper writes, **CHARACTERISTICS OF A WELCOMING COMMUNITY**. Catechist invites a spokesperson from each group to write their group's answers to the last question on the paper. Share insights gleaned from their small group discussion.



Sharing Catholic Doctrine

Drawn from the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Refer to articles 642; and 874-913.

Church Structure

Catechist continues:

God is present to us through one very important sign, the *Church*. There are many different names for Church. People need to belong.

- Can you think of some other names for the Church besides Church?

Possible answers will include: community, people of God, assembly, Sunday gathering, and so forth. Catechist invites participants to respond to the following question in the wider group.

- How many have ever been to a huge football game of your favorite team?
- How does it feel? What happens?
- What do people do to show they belong to a certain team?

They should respond with things such as

- ✓ wear the teams colors
- ✓ cheer
- ✓ sing
- ✓ act like fools
- ✓ scream
- ✓ do the wave
- ✓ buy team memorabilia

Catechist continues:

We all have a need to belong. Even people that do not have any faith have a basic human need to belong to groups.

God knows this about us, and promised us that whenever we gathered as a group that he would be with us. The really important point here is that the *group itself would be a sign of his love for us*.

You are now going to explore a Church teaching by taking responsibility to teach one another. We are each going to read various sections and then discuss them.

Biblical Understanding of Church

People of God in the Old and New Testament

Catechist invites participants to alternate reading, one bullet at a time, and discuss the related questions in the wider group.

In Old Testament times

- ▶ We seldom take the time to realize that the ancient biblical environment was treacherous and dangerous.
- ▶ The basic requirements of life were scarce.
- ▶ There was hardly enough food and water for everyone.
- ▶ Members of the community relied on the community itself for survival and protection.
- ▶ We hear of people being exiled in the Scriptures and think little of it. For them, it was equivalent to a death sentence.
- ▶ People thought of themselves in terms of the group to which they belonged. They thought less of their individuality and more of their membership in the community.
- ▶ Life could not be sustained outside of the community.
- ▶ The community was necessary for food and for shelter from the elements.
- ▶ For this reason, the community itself became a symbol of the presence of God. The community was an image, a metaphor, for God's care of the people he created.
- ▶ Survival depended on the community.
- ▶ Since community was absolutely necessary for ancient people to survive, the community became a sign of who God is, how God acts, and what it means to be God's people. God is like the community. They could experience God's presence in community. God is provider, protector, and the One who sustains life.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ What did we just learn about the community in this last section?
- ▶ What are the implications of what we learned?
- ▶ What are the implications for us today?

The readers continue:

- ▶ The people of Israel were formed from tribes, which were unions between extended families, parents, brothers, sisters, cousins, in-laws, slaves, and servants.
- ▶ A person's identity was tied to the tribe.
- ▶ Participation in the tribe prompted the celebration of rituals that supported the family tribe such as marriage, burials, and common festival meals.
- ▶ Passover was one such ritual.
- ▶ Israel was elected by God to become a great nation; it had a special purpose in God's plan for the salvation of the world.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ What does this last section tell us about the dynamics of the concept: People of God?

The readers continue:

- ▶ God would provide, sustain, and protect Israel.
- ▶ The people would enjoy God's blessing, sharing, and peace, known as *shalom*.
- ▶ In return, they would love one another and take care of those who could not care for themselves.
- ▶ They would be obedient to God by following the commandments and the words of the prophets.
- ▶ Every time Israel sinned by going their own way, they understood their sin as disobedience to God's will.
- ▶ Calamity was understood as God's punishment for breaking the covenant.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ What does this section teach us about ancient Israel's relationship with God?
- ▶ How did the ancient Israelites understand sin?
- ▶ What were the implications for the community?

In New Testament times

The readers continue:

- ▶ The New Testament embraced the Old Testament's understanding of the concept of being the people of God, but they took it one step further.
- ▶ The people of God were all those who accepted Christ.
- ▶ Thus, the invitation to become the people of God was open to all, whether Jew, Greek, or Gentile. It was open to anyone who would accept that Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God.
- ▶ When the Christian Church adapted the term *ekklesia* (church) it meant the gathering of a new people as citizens of a new political reality, the reign of God.
- ▶ Christians were new citizens of the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the new eternal city, the new Jerusalem.
- ▶ God's new paradise would be open to all people inclusively without distinctions.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ How did the first Christian Church understand community and what it meant to be the people of God?
- ▶ How did they expand the notion from its Old Testament roots?

For Jesus and the Church

The readers continue:

- ▶ The Church teaches that Jesus himself instituted the Church.
- ▶ Jesus established his reign and created a fertile field for the Church to grow.
- ▶ He preached the good news of the coming of God's kingdom.
- ▶ He established God's reign here on earth. The Church continues the kingdom Christ established (CCC, 763).

- ▶ Jesus himself set forth the structure that would forever remain. Jesus chose the first twelve with Peter as the leader. The first twelve apostles represented the twelve tribes of Israel and the new Jerusalem, formed to live the new covenant forged by Christ.
- ▶ Jesus created, prepared, built, and strengthened the foundation of his Church.
- ▶ Christ gave birth to the Church through the kenosis (self-emptying) of his life, through the spilling of his blood for it. The Church was born when water and blood poured from the side of Christ on Calvary, water as sign of regeneration and new birth of Christians through baptism, and blood a sign of the covenant he forged by his sacrificial death on the Cross that would continue in the Eucharist.
- ▶ Baptism and Eucharist are the foundations of membership in the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. The signs of those sacraments were poured forth from the side of Christ on Calvary.
- ▶ Upon Jesus' death, his Spirit would pour forth the gifts necessary for it to complete the mission for which Christ was sent. The Spirit gifted and continues to gift the Church with "hierarchic and charismatic gifts." The Church, like Christ continues the self-sacrificing, acts of love, charity, humility, and self-denial. It continues to proclaim Jesus Christ crucified and the kingdom he came to establish (768).
- ▶ Prior to the Second Vatican Council, throughout most of Church history, Church was understood in top-down, authoritarian order. The Second Vatican Council restored the early Church's concept of people of God as a metaphor for the Church. The Church itself is a sign of God's living presence.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in the wider group.

- ▶ Why does the Church teach that the Church was born on Calvary?
- ▶ What signs were given on the cross that would continue to grow and sustain the Church through the ages to come?

We can learn what Church means by looking at how our liturgy understands it.

The readers continue:

- ▶ Liturgy understands that community is a primary sign of God's presence.
- ▶ The first place people encounter the presence of Christ in worship is in the community.
- ▶ The Church community is like a sacrament (CCC, 775).
- ▶ Remember that a sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by Christ to give grace. Sacraments are signs of Christ's presence.
- ▶ The Church is an outward sign of Christ's presence.
- ▶ The Church pours forth the grace Christ entrusted to it.
- ▶ The gathered assembly of God's People is a sign of God's presence.
- ▶ We are part of a Church that is very diverse.
- ▶ It welcomes all people in their diversity.

What does it mean that the Church is like a sacrament?

- ▶ Our Church tells us that the Church is like a sacrament.
- ▶ We define a sacrament as an outward sign, that is, something embodied in concrete form like a symbol such as water, bread, or oil. Christ is present to us in these signs. Through them, we are gifted with the essence of his ministry on earth, such as his cleansing, nourishing, healing, and soothing ministry.
- ▶ When we use the sacramental symbol and we say the accompanying words with the sacramental symbol we continue to encounter Jesus' presence during his absence.
- ▶ The Church is a concrete symbol that expresses the presence of God. The concrete symbol is the people of God, which you can see, experience, and observe with your senses.
- ▶ The reality you can see and encounter with your senses is the Church community; the part that you cannot see (but which is just as true and just as real) is the presence of God in the community.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions. Catechist shares a story from his or her life and invites the participants to respond in groups of two. See appendix #1 for an example.

- ▶ What does it mean to your own life that the Church is like a sacrament?



Keeping time

If time is an issue, this may be a point at which you could stop for this session. Pick up next time with a brief review before going on.

We can look to the text for the Dedication of a Church and find other meanings for Church.

The readers continue:

- ▶ The Church is the Body of Christ.
- ▶ The Church is a temple made up of living stones.
- ▶ The Church is the sinless bride of Christ.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit guides the Church.
- ▶ The Church is an image of the heavenly city.
- ▶ God established the Church as his holy city founded by the apostles.
- ▶ Jesus is the cornerstone of the Church.
- ▶ The Holy Spirit continues to build the Church and holds it together through love.
- ▶ It is also important to note that Church includes all Christian denominations (with Trinitarian baptism) as part of the Church.
- ▶ When we refer to the “Church,” we refer to all Christians who are connected to and subsist within the Catholic Church.
- ▶ Other Christian churches are already a part of the Catholic Church because of baptism. Christianity was presented first to Peter and the first disciples. There has been an unbroken line of authority since Peter, thus all Christian churches in some way are part of the Catholic Church because they all have their roots in that first Church, the Church that continues today.

Church structure

The readers continue:

- ▶ Without leadership, an organization cannot get much accomplished.
- ▶ Everyone has a responsibility to make the organization work.
- ▶ The Church is the same way. There are different ministries, but all are equal in the eyes of God.
- ▶ The Bishop of Rome is the bishop of the universal Church.
- ▶ We are part of the universal Church.
- ▶ We are not just parishioners of our parish communities.
- ▶ But we are part of a world-wide universal Church.
- ▶ The supreme leader is the pope who shares leadership responsibilities in the Church with the cardinals and bishops.

Who makes up the Church?

- ▶ All the people of God make up the Church.
- ▶ The people are a sacramental sign of God's presence.
- ▶ The people of God include the laity, priests, deacons, religious, and the hierarchical structure.
- ▶ Together we make up the Church.

Pope:

- ▶ The pope leads us, but he leads us with the wisdom of all the members.
- ▶ The pope is elected for a life term by the College of Cardinals. He is the supreme leader of the Church.
- ▶ The Pope is the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church.
- ▶ The Church teaches that the Pope cannot make a mistake. He is infallible, but only when speaking in a formal, intentional statement about faith and morals.
- ▶ So strong is the Church's belief that the Holy Spirit guides us in faith and morals that we can say with assurance that he is speaking infallibly when he takes that position of authority.
- ▶ He has to state definitively that he is speaking from the chair, that is, from the official seat of St. Peter.
- ▶ The last time he spoke with such authority was in 1950 when the pope declared the doctrine of the Assumption of Mary (that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven upon her death).
- ▶ Before that was in 1854 when the pope declared the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception (that she was born without sin). Such infallible statements are extremely rare.
- ▶ In order for a teaching to be considered infallible, the pope must declare that he is speaking infallibly, which means he is speaking *ex cathedra* (from the chair—understood since ancient times as a metaphor for supreme authority).
- ▶ Even though the pope does not teach infallibly all the time, or even very often, we are to take the teaching authority of the entire Church, the Magisterium, and all the people very seriously.

Catechist invites participants to engage in a brief summary.

- ▶ How long does the pope hold office of pope?
- ▶ What does it mean that the pope is infallible?

Catechist invites participants to share in groups of two, then open for wider group discussion.

- ▶ Do you think all Catholics accept all teachings of the Church?
- ▶ What does the Church teach about that?
- ▶ Are there teachings of the Church that you find difficult to accept?
- ▶ What might you do about that?

Catechist continues:

The Church insists that we are given freedom to choose to accept what the Church teaches and that if our conscience is in right moral order, it will naturally accept the teachings of the Church. It is a grave matter to reject the teaching of the Church. However, we have a responsibility to form a good, moral conscience (discussed in depth in another session).

The readers continue:

College of Cardinals:

- ▶ The entire group of cardinals is called the College of Cardinals.
- ▶ The College has two roles.
- ▶ It elects a new pope when the pope dies.
- ▶ It advises the pope when he calls them to special meetings.
- ▶ since the 14th century, the pope has always been chosen from among the College of Cardinals.

Bishops, priests, and deacons

- ▶ The Church is shepherded and maintained through the anointed, ordained ministry of bishop, who is the spiritual leader of all the parishes in his diocese.
- ▶ A pastor is appointed as spiritual shepherd of the parish itself and he is often assisted by other ordained priests who are sometimes called associate priests.
- ▶ Priests and bishops in the Latin rite may not marry; they lead a celibate life.
- ▶ A deacon is an ordained man (married or unmarried) who assists the bishop in the work and mission of the diocese. His role is totally one of servant.

Laity

- ▶ The laity are called to serve Christ and his Church.
- ▶ Lay persons serve in many ministries in the Church.
- ▶ Lay people cannot preside or preach at Mass, or administer the sacraments.
- ▶ Lay people can...
 - preside over liturgy of the word services,
 - give a reflection (preach) at such services,
 - lead and serve in ministry groups,
 - serve as duly appointed catechists,
 - serve in liturgical ministries such as proclaiming God's word, serving at

God's table as a Eucharistic minister, offering hospitality as an usher, leading the community in such prayer through the role of cantor, music ministry, and choir.

- Be an active member of the worshipping community.

In sum

- ▶ Jesus taught us parables to show us what the Church is like.
- ▶ Jesus called the Church the kingdom.
- ▶ So many of his stories tried to teach us what it meant to be part of his kingdom.
- ▶ The Church is a community of believers.
- ▶ The Church is the Body of Christ.
- ▶ The Church is Jesus' hands, feet, eyes, ears, liver, heart, and more.
- ▶ Just like Jesus, we are called to serve and help people.
- ▶ The Church helps us to live like Jesus.

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following questions in groups of four. Share insights in the wider group.

- ▶ We are forming you to be an active member of the Church who will commit to serve God and his Church.
- ▶ After all we have talked about regarding the Church, in what way has the Church had an influence on you and on your Christian journey?
- ▶ Why is it important for you to be a part of the Church?
- ▶ What can you do to make the Church better?
- ▶ What gifts do you bring to make the Church better?



Mystagogy & your decision for change

Catechist invites participants to reflect on the sacramental power of the Church transform their lives. See appendix #2

- ▶ How does this teaching about the Church Structure relate to your life?
- ▶ How does it relate to what is going on in our world right now? (Lack of health care, joblessness, war, etc.)

Liturgy, Scripture, and doctrine challenge us to transform our lives so that we can go out and help transform the world.

Catechist informs the group of any parish activity and makes arrangements of group participation.

What is taking place in the parish community this week/season that would challenge us to participate more fully in the Church? For example, “Our social concerns center provides, food, clothing and household needs to the poor in our area. They are looking for volunteers to help at the center. We will meet at the center this Tuesday evening at 6:00.”

Catechist invites participants to respond to the following challenge by sharing with one other person.

- ▶ In what way does today’s session challenge you to change?
- ▶ Is there a behavior or attitude in need of transformation?

- ▶ What are you willing to commit to do in response to what you learned about the Church?
- ▶ What are the implications for your life?

Journal

Reflect in writing or in your prayers this week about the questions above, especially those that touched your heart.



Closing Prayer

Option 1: If this is a catechumenal session, end the session with Intercessions, Doxology (“Glory be to the Father...”), a minor rite—a blessing or minor exorcism, RCIA # 90-97.

Option 2: Prayer of Blessing: “Blessing of New Church Doors,” #1229 p. 521 Book of Blessings. Include intercessions and sign of peace.

Option 3: Use the prayer which is below.

We praise you, Lord God, Father all holy.
You sent your Son into our world
 to gather by the shedding of his blood,
 those whom the destructive power of sin had scattered.
You sent him to unite us all in the one sheepfold.

He is the Good Shepherd;
 He is the door through which those who follow him
 enter and are safe, so in and go out, and find pasture.

Grant that those who enter this Church
 with confident faith in him
 may persevere in the teaching of the apostles,
 in the breaking of the bread,
 and in unceasing prayer,
 and so be built into the heavenly Jerusalem.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Appendix

#1.

What does it mean to my life that the Church is like a sacrament? Several years ago, my son was in the worst phase of his illness, worse than he had been in ten years. I was at the end of my rope. My parish community had been praying with me for him for several years.

A member of my choir came to me and asked if we could set up a sacrament of the sick for my son. I thanked her and told her that we would never get him into a church. She said that she really was hoping they could celebrate the sacrament with me. She contacted the pastor and a representative community of about 40 people gathered to support me in this sacrament.

Yes indeed, the Church is like a sacrament. As Father anointed me with oil and the community extended the loving hands of Christ over me, I felt healed of the chronic crisis in my life. The anxiety, fear, and the constant crisis mode were replaced by serenity, peace, and the willingness to abandon my child into God's loving embrace.

I thought I was praying for healing for my son in proxy. Instead, I was healed. Because I was healed, my son could be released to God's care. The Church, that powerful sacrament of God, led me to the font of life where I was able to abandon my own will to God's providence.

For the first time in ten years, I was able to say, "He is yours God. Your will be done, not mine." Because of that gift of abandonment, I was released from my previous codependent behavior. Shortly thereafter, my son agreed to treatment.

I believe in the Church as sacrament, a sign, and symbol of God's presence in our midst. God was intimately present to me through its power.

#2.

We have been watching in horror the devastation of Haiti. When I consider the role the Church has in what is taking place in our world, I am uplifted. I am proud to be a member of my parish who collected \$65,000. Plus \$25,000 of our tithe to be the hands and feet of Christ in Haiti. We gave over \$90,000 to the relief of God's broken people. Many people in our parish have lost their jobs. Many are on unemployment. Many are in danger of losing their jobs in the near future, yet still we collected 90,000 for God's hurting people.

I am reminded of our sister parish in Peru. The people are devastatingly poor. We helped build a church and school for them. The priest came to our parish to personally thank us. He reminded us that even though they are poor, they too are compelled by the gospel

of Christ to reach out to those poorer than themselves. Our parish offers support for them, they offer support for a parish in Africa.

The work of the Church around the world, the Church poor, the Church not so poor, the wealthy Church. We are a city on a hill, a light set apart for all to see. It is good to be part of God's holy city.

It brings to mind a beautiful statue that graced the front of church somewhere. I only saw the picture of the statue. It is a statue of Christ the Good Shepherd who towers over his people on the ground, yet who sweetly has his hands over his face and is weeping for his children below.

St. Theresa said, "Christ has no body now but yours." We the Church are his hands and feet. The Church is a sign of God's presence on earth. We are part of that Church and as such, are also a sign of Christ's presence. May we be worthy of our highest calling.

Handout on Church Structure

In Old Testament times

- ▶ We seldom take the time to realize that the ancient biblical environment was treacherous and dangerous.
- ▶ The basic requirements of life were scarce.
- ▶ There was hardly enough food and water for everyone.
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- ▶ The people of God were all those who accepted Christ.
- ▶ Thus, the invitation to become the people of God was open to all, whether Jew, Greek, or Gentile. It was open to anyone who would accept that Jesus came to establish the kingdom of God.
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- ▶ Christians were new citizens of the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the new eternal city, the new Jerusalem.
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For Jesus and the Church

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We can learn what Church means by looking at how our liturgy understands it.

- ▶ Liturgy understands that community is a primary sign of God's presence.
- ▶ The first place people encounter the presence of Christ in worship is in the community.
- ▶ The Church community is like a sacrament (CCC, 775).
- ▶ Remember that a sacrament is an outward sign, instituted by Christ to give grace. Sacraments are signs of Christ's presence.
- ▶ The Church is an outward sign of Christ's presence.
- ▶ The Church pours forth the grace Christ entrusted to it.
- ▶ The gathered assembly of God's People is a sign of God's presence.
- ▶ We are part of a Church that is very diverse.
- ▶ It welcomes all people in their diversity.

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- ▶ When we use the sacramental symbol and we say the accompanying words with the sacramental symbol we continue to encounter Jesus' presence during his absence.

- ▶ The Church is a concrete symbol that expresses the presence of God. The concrete symbol is the people of God, which you can see, experience, and observe with your senses.
- ▶ The reality you can see and encounter with your senses is the Church community; the part that you cannot see (but which is just as true and just as real) is the presence of God in the community.

Church structure

- ▶ Without leadership, an organization cannot get much accomplished.
- ▶ Everyone has a responsibility to make the organization work.
- ▶ The Church is the same way. There are different ministries, but all are equal in the eyes of God.
- ▶ The Bishop of Rome is the bishop of the universal Church.
- ▶ We are part of the universal Church.
- ▶ We are not just parishioners of our parish communities.
- ▶ But we are part of a world-wide universal Church.
- ▶ The supreme leader is the pope who shares leadership responsibilities in the Church with the cardinals and bishops.

Who makes up the Church?

- ▶ All the people of God make up the Church.
- ▶ The people are a sacramental sign of God's presence.
- ▶ The people of God include the laity, priests, deacons, religious, and the hierarchical structure.
- ▶ Together we make up the Church.

Pope:

- ▶ The pope leads us, but he leads us with the wisdom of all the members.
- ▶ The pope is elected for a life term by the College of Cardinals. He is the supreme leader of the Church.
- ▶ The Pope is the spiritual leader of the Roman Catholic Church.
- ▶ The Church teaches that the Pope cannot make a mistake. He is infallible, but only when speaking in a formal, intentional statement about faith and morals.
- ▶ So strong is the Church's belief that the Holy Spirit guides us in faith and morals that we can say with assurance that he is speaking infallibly when he takes that position of authority.
- ▶ He has to state definitively that he is speaking from the chair, that is, from the official seat of St. Peter.
- ▶ The last time he spoke with such authority was in 1950 when the pope declared the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary (that she was born without sin).
- ▶ Before that was in 1854 when the pope declared the doctrine of the Assumption, that Mary was bodily assumed into heaven upon her death. Such infallible statements are extremely rare.

- ▶ In order for a teaching to be considered infallible, the pope must declare that he is speaking infallibly, which means he is speaking *ex cathedra* (from the chair—understood since ancient times as a metaphor for supreme authority).
- ▶ Even though the pope does not teach infallibly all the time, or even very often, we are to take the teaching authority of the entire Church, the Magisterium, and all the people very seriously.

College of Cardinals:

- ▶ The entire group of cardinals is called the College of Cardinals.
- ▶ The College has two roles.
- ▶ It elects a new pope when the pope dies.
- ▶ It advises the pope when he calls them to special meetings.
- ▶ since the 14th century, the pope has always been chosen from among the College of Cardinals.

Bishops, priests, and deacons

- ▶ The Church is shepherded and maintained through the anointed, ordained ministry of bishop, who is the spiritual leader of all the parishes in his diocese.
- ▶ A pastor is appointed as spiritual shepherd of the parish itself and he is often assisted by other ordained priests who are sometimes called associate priests.
- ▶ Priests and bishops in the Latin rite may not marry; they lead a celibate life.
- ▶ A deacon is an ordained man (married or unmarried) who assists the bishop in the work and mission of the diocese. His role is totally one of servant.

Laity

- ▶ The laity are called to serve Christ and his Church.
- ▶ Lay persons serve in many ministries in the Church.
- ▶ Lay people cannot preside or preach at Mass, or administer the sacraments.
- ▶ Lay people can...
 - preside over liturgy of the word services,
 - give a reflection (preach) at such services,
 - lead and serve in ministry groups,
 - serve as duly appointed catechists,
 - serve in liturgical ministries such as proclaiming God's word, serving at God's table as a Eucharistic minister, offering hospitality as an usher, leading the community in such prayer through the role of cantor, music ministry, and choir.
 - Be an active member of the worshipping community.